

# Membership in the Church

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## Personal Blessings in a Worldwide Church

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As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you belong to a local congregation—a ward or branch. There you are taught the restored gospel, have opportunities for service, have access to sacred priesthood ordinances, and find fellowship with other Latter-day Saints. It is there that you have a bishop or branch president and home and visiting teachers who help watch over you.

As a Latter-day Saint you are also a member of a worldwide church with members in over 170 nations. Even if you move to another neighborhood, city, or country, there will be a congregation that you will belong to. And all of the same blessings and privileges will be yours—including the blessing of fellowship. The gospel makes brothers and sisters of all of us, and wherever we go in the world, we find others with whom we have something very significant in common.

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## On the Same Path

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Like the other members of your ward or branch, you entered the path toward eternal life when you were baptized by true priesthood authority and received the gift of the Holy Ghost (see [2 Nephi 31:17–18](#)). At the time of your baptism, you made covenants, or promises, with God. You promised to follow Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. As you do these things, the Spirit of the Lord will guide and strengthen you to continue on the path. Each week, you can join with your ward or branch to partake of the sacrament and renew your baptismal covenants.

## Serving along the Way

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Another covenant you made at baptism was to serve. Having callings or responsibilities within your ward or branch is a great blessing and opportunity. When you serve, you grow spiritually and experience the joy of following Jesus's example. You will also form bonds of friendship and love with those you serve. As you reach out to help others on the path to eternal life, you will find that your own problems and worries will become lighter, and you will be strengthened in your resolve to continue the journey.

There are many ways to serve in the Church. You may be asked to teach a Sunday class to young children, lead the congregational singing, organize social activities, coordinate emergency preparedness, or fulfill a variety of other responsibilities. All adults are also asked to serve as home or visiting teachers; this opportunity is part of an inspired program to ensure that all members of the congregation are watched over, visited, and taught in their homes. In addition to whatever formal assignments you receive, you can often serve best by just being a friend to members of the congregation, as well as those not of our faith.

## Temples: Earthly Symbols of a Heavenly Goal

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The path you share with other members of your ward or branch has an ultimate destination: heaven, or eternal life with God as families. Temples of the Church are an earthly symbol of that heavenly goal. The Church regards the family as the most important unit in this life and eternity, and in the temple you can receive ordinances and make covenants that will bind you to God and your family. In temples you can also feel a closeness to Him that provides spiritual renewal and a glimpse of future blessings.

Elder Russell M. Nelson taught:

The temple is the object of every activity, every lesson, every progressive step in the Church. All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. Ordinances of the temple are absolutely crucial. We cannot return to God's glory without them.

As you serve and grow in the Church, focus on helping your family and others receive the blessings of the temple.

## Rejoicing and Sharing

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In the scriptures we are taught that “men are, that they might have joy” ([2 Nephi 2:25](#)). Although we will all experience times of trial and sadness, we go forward with faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and His ultimate redeeming power.

We are uniquely blessed to be guided by a living prophet and apostles who receive ongoing revelation from God. We know that His plan is a plan of happiness and that if we are faithful, He will give us peace in this life and glorious blessings in the life to come. In these truths we find joy, and for these reasons we help one another on our life’s journey. The Church’s missionaries, who are recognized worldwide, are examples of what we should strive to be—grateful followers of Jesus Christ who rejoice in His goodness and share His gospel with all who will hear.

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